

FORM NO. 51-NC  
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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
INFORMATION FROM  
FOREIGN DOCUMENTS OR RADIO BROADCASTS

REPORT

CD NO.

COUNTRY China  
SUBJECT Sociological - Minorities, languageDATE OF  
INFORMATION 1955HOW  
PUBLISHED Daily newspaper

DATE DIST. 22 May 1956

WHERE  
PUBLISHED Nan-ning

50X1-HUM

DATE  
PUBLISHED 11 Dec 1955

NO. OF PAGES 2

LANGUAGE Chinese

SUPPLEMENT TO  
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SOURCE Kwangsi Jih-pao

DRAFT PLAN FOR WRITTEN LANGUAGE OF THE T'UNG NATIONALITY IN CHINA

The recently drafted plan for the written language of the T'ung (僮) nationality follows. The letters of the alphabet are given in T'ung print and not script. However, there is a script style of writing with capitals and small letters.

A. Language

The language as spoken in the northern part of the T'ung Autonomous Region in western Kwangsi was selected as the basis for the written language of the T'ung nationality. The Wu-ming dialect was adopted as standard.

B. The Alphabet

Capitals: A B C D E F H I J K L M N ŋ O P R S T U V W X Y Z

Small Letters: a b c d e f h i j k l m n ŋ o p r s t u v w x y z

C. Explanations

1. The written T'ung language is a phonetic system. There are 29 letters in the alphabet: 16 consonants, 8 vowels, and 5 tone signs. These letters can be used to represent any syllable in the standard dialect.

2. Each consonant and vowel in the T'ung alphabet has the same phonetic value as its corresponding symbol in the International Phonetic System as indicated below. (Corresponding international symbols are given in brackets.)

Consonants: b c d f h j k l m n ŋ p r s t w [b c d f h j k l m n ŋ p r s t w]

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Vowels: a e ə i o e u ɪ [a ɛ ǣ i ɔ ʏ u ɯ]

3. The tone value indicated by each tone sign is as follows:

Tone sign:	ḇ	3	4	ḅ	ḁ
Tone value:	low descending	high level	medium descending	high ascending	medium level

4. Initials, finals, and tone signs are used in the formation of morphemes (syllables). There are three methods.

First, a syllable sometimes consists of a final. For example, "ou" and "əK," which are equivalent to the Chinese expressions 欧 and 胸, respectively, are finals in written T'ung.

Secondly, a syllable is sometimes formed by combining an initial and a final; for example, "ma" and "mak," which correspond with the Chinese expressions 吗 and 果子. In these two syllables, "m" is an initial whereas "a" and "ak" are finals.

Third, a syllable is sometimes formed by combining an initial, a final, and a tone sign. For example, "maɰ" and "məKb," which are equivalent to 吗 and 美. In these two syllables, "m" is an initial, "a" and "əK" are finals, and "ɰ" and "b" are tone signs.

The three methods are summarized as follows:

Final = syllable.

Initial + final = syllable.

Initial + final + tone sign = syllable.

5. The word rather than the syllable is the unit of expression in the written T'ung language; therefore, all the syllables in a word are linked together. The word components (or syllables) of a compound word are also linked together. For instance, "rek tiŋ fei" are three separate words which, when not linked together, make up a sentence which means, "Bird pecks tree." But linked together they become one word, rektiŋ fei, which means "woodpecker." "Kuŋ cantan," which means "Communist Party," is an example of a compound word formed by linking together syllables and simple words.

Other rules for spelling, word-linkage, tone indication, capitalization, abbreviations, paragraphing, punctuation, etc., have been drawn up for written T'ung.

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